

Pinocchio

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a carpenter called Geppetto. He lived in a little workshop that smelled of wood and memories.

He had big hands that could turn a log into wonderful things, and a face full of wrinkles that told the story of all the smiles he had made in his life.

Geppetto had always wished for a son or a daughter, but life had given him another gift: kind, skilful hands that could create, with wood, small and great marvels.

In every house in the village there were his tables and wardrobes; at school the children sat at the desks and little chairs he had built with so much love. Everywhere there were bowls, cupboards, doors... and all of them made people feel well, because things made with the heart spread peace.

One day Geppetto found a strange piece of wood. It was not like the others: it was warm, light, and it almost seemed to... breathe!

Then he had an idea: to make a puppet that could move without strings. A puppet free to go wherever he wanted, to think whatever he wanted, to discover his own path and walk it with whomever he chose.

His hands began at once to carve a new life: a puppet with a cheeky little heart.

Chapter 2

Geppetto's hands knew how to carve, and he let them work without thinking too much.

First he made the head, round like the full moon, then the arms, long and ready to hug the world. At last he made the legs, strong and made for running towards dreams.

He even made a little suit and a paper hat in bright colours.

Quite satisfied, the man looked at his puppet: it was perfect.

"I'll call you Pinocchio," he whispered.

Then something extraordinary happened: Pinocchio moved one finger, then another... Geppetto held his breath, but when the puppet opened his eyes wide and looked at him, his heart burst with joy.

Then he heard a tiny voice calling him: "Dad? Dad?"

At that very moment, at dawn, the sun appeared on the horizon.

It was the beginning of a new day and of Pinocchio's adventures.

Chapter 3

Pinocchio looked around with curious eyes, amazed at everything, and Geppetto hurried to give each thing a name.

"And what's this?"

“That’s the table, that is the chair... this is a plate, and over there is the hammer... here’s the cat, and this is a... smile.”

Geppetto taught Pinocchio to walk and to hop. His knees creaked: it was the song of life taking its first steps in the world.

The puppet did not take long to learn; he just followed his instinct with a little help from his dad. Towards evening they sat close by the fire for their first cuddle — the kind that makes you feel safe, always.

Chapter 4

The next morning Geppetto left home very early to buy bread and pears.

Meanwhile Pinocchio explored the house: a jar of nails, an old clock ticking away, the cat hiding under the table...

Suddenly a thin voice sounded in the room: “Pinocchio, what are you looking for?”

The puppet turned sharply. On a shelf, next to a candle, there was a little green cricket with bright, smiling eyes.

“And who are you?” asked Pinocchio, amazed.

“I’m the Talking Cricket, and I want to help you take the right steps in life!”

“Steps? Do you mean you’ll tell me where to go?”

“Oh no,” said the Cricket. “No one can tell you what to do. I only want to give you a gift.”

“I’ve got everything: legs, arms, ears, eyes, and a nose! I’m not missing anything at all!” said Pinocchio.

“You’re missing what is important and invisible: a heart for loving.”

The Cricket hopped onto the table and placed his tiny paw on the puppet’s chest. A gentle warmth wrapped around him.

Then, looking him over carefully, he added, “I’d say you also need some playful hair, so the wind can ruffle it!”

He took some blue wool from the shelf and, with a dab of wood glue, stuck it on Pinocchio’s head. Pinocchio touched it. Now he had a spark in his chest and a soft stroke on his head.

“Thank you, Cricket. You’re kind.”

“I’m kind because you want kindness around you, and you’re ready to give it. Good luck.”

Chapter 5

The next morning, when the sun was still hidden behind the hill and everything was cold and dark, Geppetto left the house. He walked wrapped in his coat, watching the last handful of stars fade from the sky.

He came back soon after, shivering, wearing only his jumper and carrying a parcel under his arm.

He had sold his coat to buy Pinocchio a book.

The creak of the door woke the puppet, who looked at him and asked, “Dad, what’s that?”

“It’s a book,” said Geppetto. “When you want to know new things, someone has discovered them before you and written them here in these pages.”

“But why should I know them?” asked Pinocchio, snuggling into the blankets.

Geppetto came close and whispered, “Reading a book is like travelling to far-off worlds.”

“And why should I know far-off worlds?”

“To learn to understand those close to you who are different from you. Then your life will open to wonder and to true friendship.”

Geppetto handed him the book with a smile that didn't match the cold that made him tremble. “Take it. You'll need it for your first day at school.”

“Dad, what is school?” asked Pinocchio.

“It's a place where there are teachers who know what to do with your questions. And having answers will help you walk on the right path.”

Chapter 6

Pinocchio, with the book tucked under his arm, set off for school.

But along the way his eyes grew wide with wonder: in front of him stood a colourful theatre with red curtains and a golden sign a passer-by read for him: “The Puppet Theatre”.

Excited, he thought, “Inside there I'll find friends!”

School didn't seem so important now. The idea of meeting someone exactly like him made his heart beat fast, and without thinking twice he sold the book for a ticket.

When he entered the theatre, sparkling lights, music, and laughter wrapped around him like a hug. It felt like a world made just for him.

On impulse he jumped onto the stage and began to dance with Columbine. The puppets moved to the music, but it was Fire-Eater who pulled all their strings and made them dance.

Pinocchio had no strings: he was unpredictable, impossible to control!

Chapter 7

As soon as the puppeteer Fire-Eater noticed him, he froze and hung up the control bars.

All the puppets stopped still in strange poses.

Pinocchio looked around, frightened. Someone had turned his new friends into statues — Columbine too!

Then he saw Fire-Eater coming closer. He was enormous, and his voice seemed to come from a cave.

“And who are you?” he asked, staring at him curiously.

Pinocchio trembled and, in a thin voice, replied, “I... I'm Pi... Pinocchio. I didn't mean any harm. I only wanted friends to dance and play with.”

Fire-Eater looked at him, serious. “I'm the one who makes them move. They're only bits of wood.”

Pinocchio said, “Then... perhaps you're a friend?”

Those words went straight to Fire-Eater's heart. Beneath his thick beard and stern look there was a man who knew loneliness very well.

“Where do you come from, stringless puppet?”

Pinocchio told him about the first time he'd opened his eyes and seen Geppetto, and about his dad in the cold, with no coat any more.

Fire-Eater softened. A little tear slid down his face and hid in his beard.

He took five gold coins from his pocket. “Take them to your dad,” he said in a kinder voice.

Pinocchio opened his small wooden hands and accepted the gift. Holding them tight he thought that sometimes help comes from those who frighten you. Then he hugged Fire-Eater and whispered a tiny “thank you” that echoed through the theatre and woke the puppets’ smiles.

Chapter 8

Walking happily home, Pinocchio tossed the coins up and caught them again. All at once a cat with spectacles and a fox with a long, scruffy tail appeared before him.

“Where are you going with those coins?” asked the Fox, tilting her head slyly. “I’m taking them to my dad!” said Pinocchio proudly.

The Cat grinned crookedly. “Today is your lucky day: you’ll take home not five... but a hundred, a thousand gold coins!”

“Oh, thank you! Will you give them to me?” said Pinocchio.

“No, no,” purred the Fox sweetly. “Much better: we’ll tell you how to make your money grow!”

“Grow?” asked the puppet, curious.

The Fox whispered, “You only need to go to the Field of Miracles — a place where dreams come true! Plant your coins and next day... puff! Up pops a tree full of gold pieces!”

“And then you can take them to whomever you like,” added the Cat.

Pinocchio’s eyes lit up. “I’ll take them to my dad... I’ll take him loads!”

“Follow us, little friend, and we’ll show you the way,” they said together.

And Pinocchio went with them.

Chapter 9

When they reached the Field of Miracles, the Fox pointed to a spot and, with a crafty smile, said, “Plant your coins here, beside this big stone.”

Pinocchio dug a small hole and buried his coins. Then, just as they’d told him, he lay down nearby and fell asleep, dreaming of a tall tree covered with gold coins and of his father’s joy.

When he woke, the sun was high, but beside him there was only an empty hole.

The coins had gone, and so had the Cat and the Fox.

Pinocchio didn’t understand. “How is it possible to say something when you know it isn’t true? To say one thing and think another?” he murmured.

He looked again at the empty hole. “I shouldn’t have listened to their words... I should have watched their silences.”

He lowered his head. “Now I’ve no book, I can’t go to school, and I’m ashamed to go home.”

And sitting on the ground, he cried wooden tears that looked like seeds.

Chapter 10

Pinocchio wandered on, sad and downhearted, until he came near a little house full of flowers. At the window stood a fairy with long turquoise hair.

“Good morning, puppet. Are you sad?” the Fairy asked, with a voice that sounded like a hug. Pinocchio nodded and told her about the lie the Cat and the Fox had told him.

The Fairy let her words fall onto Pinocchio’s head like a stroke from above.

“You know, each time you tell a lie something always happens. Would you like to try?”

Pinocchio smiled. “Yes! I... can jump like a frog!”

Crr... crr... creak! His nose grew, a little.

Pinocchio laughed and added, “I’m blue and I’ve a red beard like Fire-Eater!”

Crr... crr... creak! His nose grew longer still.

“And I’m... a white rabbit flying through the clouds!”

Crr... crr... creak! His nose grew so long it touched the Fairy.

The puppet burst out laughing, then grew serious. “How funny... so every time you tell a lie, something strange happens to you.”

“Exactly. Something that stops you getting close to people and walking straight. Like... a very long nose,” said the Fairy.

Pinocchio looked at her and from far below said, “I’m Pinocchio and... I don’t know why, but I love you.”

At that moment his nose returned to its usual size.

The Fairy dropped a tiny kiss on his forehead.

With his eyes closed Pinocchio said, “I want to go to school. And then go back to my dad.”

“Safe travels, Pinocchio,” whispered the Fairy, and a blue hair, bright with light, fell onto his woolly curls.

Chapter 11

On the way to school Pinocchio met a boy called Candlewick. He was skipping and singing.

“Hi! Where are you going with that serious face?” the boy asked.

“I’m going to school,” said Pinocchio proudly.

“School? Oh no! Come with me to Funland. It’s the most exciting place in the world!”

Pinocchio thought, “I’ve found a friend!”

And so... he forgot school, Geppetto, the Fairy... and went with him.

Funland had carousels with horses, swings hanging from the clouds, castles in bloom, and very long slides!

They arrived at first light and were the first children to play.

Pinocchio climbed onto the carousel at once: it went round and round without going anywhere, yet it felt as if he were travelling far.

Chapter 12

The next morning Pinocchio woke up feeling strange.

His ears had grown long and furry and... he had a tail!

He ran to a mirror and saw that... he had turned into a little donkey.
“What’s happened to me?” he cried.

Just then a man flung open the door and shouted, “Here’s a new donkey. From today you’ll work for me!”

Pinocchio felt different. His eyes saw shapes and colours he had never noticed as a puppet. It was interesting to be a different creature, but being a donkey meant obeying the whip, with no one understanding that you are alive and afraid.

The man tied a rope around his neck and dragged him out.
Another donkey walked beside him. Pinocchio recognised Candlewick’s eyes — sad eyes that seemed to say, “It’s my fault.”
But it wasn’t true. Pinocchio had chosen to follow him.

“And now?” he thought. “What will become of him? What will become of me?”
A lash struck Candlewick, and it hurt Pinocchio as if it had struck him.

Chapter 13

The man took him to work in a circus.
All around him dazzling lights and laughter whirled together.
Drums rolled and a whip cracked in the air, pushing him to jump through a ring of fire that burned his skin.

Pinocchio thought, “Doesn’t anyone see that while they laugh I’m afraid?”

For a moment he looked at the other circus animals. In each pair of eyes he saw the same terror — eyes that shouted without a voice.

Full of sadness, he missed a jump and fell. A sharp pain shot through him: his leg was broken. The circus man came close and glared at him. Then, in a cold, low voice, he whispered, “A lame donkey is no use to me. I’ll throw you into the sea.”

He dragged him away. Pinocchio limped, his head down with pain and sadness.
He thought of Geppetto: “I’ll never see him again, and he’ll go on looking for me and never find me. I was meant to change his life and make him happy. And instead...”

Chapter 14

They reached the cliff when it was already night.
The moon painted its light on the waves, turning them into a path of tiny stars.

On the top of the cliff Pinocchio watched the waves break against the rocks.
The circus man didn’t see the poor little donkey’s fear, only the money he’d have to spend to heal him, to feed him.
And so... he gave him a push.

Pinocchio fell into the sea, thinking he would die.
He let himself go and his body turned back into that of a puppet.
He began to float, like a boat with no sail that doesn't know where the sea will take it.

Then Pinocchio saw a huge whale coming nearer with its mouth wide open.
He tried to escape, but before he could... he was swallowed.
As he slid into the whale's belly he cried into the dark, "Dad... my dad... Dad..."

Chapter 15

He thought he heard Geppetto's voice calling him, "My son, I'm here!"
The voice grew stronger until, at the bottom of the whale's belly, he saw... Geppetto!

"Dad!" he shouted, running to hug him.
Thin and tired, Geppetto held him tight.
"Pinocchio, I thought I'd lost you," he said, with tears in his eyes.

Geppetto told him how he had looked for him everywhere, day and night, until he ended up in the sea and was swallowed by the whale.
Pinocchio told him about his troubles.

Geppetto knew his son. He knew he needed fresh air, running in the fields, the freedom to go where he wished.

They had to get out. To save his son, he decided to escape.
By setting him free, he set himself free as well.

The whale slept, rocked by the waves... but every now and then it opened its mouth.
Together, hand in hand, they found the courage to leap out.

Because he was made of wood, Pinocchio floated on the sea.
Geppetto clung to him, and when they were near enough to the shore, Dad — who could swim — began to kick towards it.
They reached the beach. They were safe.

Chapter 16

Tired but happy, Pinocchio and Geppetto returned to their little village.

In the morning Pinocchio woke with a smile.
He looked at his wooden hands. His legs creaked, and his nose — pointed and shiny — caught the sunlight.

Something inside him had changed, yet he was still a wooden puppet.
He went quietly to Geppetto and whispered, "Dad... I'll never be a real boy."

Geppetto hugged him and smiled.
"Pinocchio, it doesn't matter if you're made of wood or flesh. You are my son, and I love you just as you are."

Pinocchio's eyes widened. "Really, Dad? I don't have to be like the others?"
Geppetto shook his head. "No, my little one. You are unique and wonderful."
"Even if I make a mess?"
"Even if you make a mess — and you'll probably make many more!"

Pinocchio felt his heart beating fast inside his wooden chest.
He didn't need to change to be loved.

If you'd like, I can also format this into a printable PDF or a Word file, or adapt the language further for 3–5 vs 6–8 year-olds.